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# ANNUAL REPORT

OF

B. POPE BARTLETT, Esq.,

Medical Officer of Health,

***MERE***

RURAL SANITARY AUTHORITY.



PRESENTED 1899.

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# Mere Rural Sanitary Authority.

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## MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT.

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*To the Chairman and Members of the Mere District Council.*

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

I have the honour to lay before you my report as Medical Officer of Health for the year ending December 31st, 1898.

### DEATHS.

During the year 1898, the deaths registered in the district numbered 71, against 64 registered in the previous year—an increase of 7. These show a death-rate of 13.6 per 1,000, population calculated on the census estimated to the middle of the year 1898. The death-rate for the whole of England and Wales for the year 1898 was 17.6 per 1,000, and infant mortality 161 per 1,000 births. Of this number, 7, or 9.9 per cent. (equal to 1.2 per 1,000 population, and 53.4 per 1,000 births) were of children under one year of age, and 42 or 59.1 per cent. of persons of 65 years of age and upwards.

According to the quarters of the year, the deaths were as follows :—

First quarter..	..	..	21
Second quarter	..	..	19
Third quarter	..	..	17
Fourth quarter	..	..	14

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71

There were 30 deaths of males and 41 of females.

### BIRTHS.

131 births were registered in the district during the year, a decrease of 21 on last year. This number is equal to an annual birth-rate of 24.2 per 1,000 population. The birth-rate for the whole of England and Wales for the year 1898 was 29.4 per 1,000. Excess of births over deaths, 60.

### MORTALITY FROM CERTAIN DISEASES.

Of the deaths classified according to their causes, 33 were due to diseases of the chest, viz., 5 to phthisis, 5 to bronchitis, pneumonia and pleurisy, and 23 to heart disease. One death was due to injuries.

## DEATHS FROM ZYMOTIC DISEASES.

Six deaths were attributed to these diseases equal to 8.4 per cent. of the total number and to 1.1 per 1,000 of population. The zymotic rate for the whole of England and Wales for the year 1898 was 2.22 per 1,000. Of these deaths three were due to influenza and occurred in the parishes of Maiden Bradley and Mere during the first three months of the year. One death due to infantile diarrhoea occurred in Maiden Bradley in January and one due to scarlatina in Mere in October.

## NEW CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES UNDER TABLE B.

During the year 1898 the district was remarkably free from infectious diseases during the first eight months of the year, only five cases being reported under the Notification Act, until the latter part of September. Since that time owing to the outbreak of scarlatina in various parts of the district 33 cases have been reported.

### SCARLATINA.

There have been three outbreaks of this disease in the district during the year. In the months of March two cases were reported in an isolated cottage at Maiden Bradley. Owing to the position of the house, no difficulty was experienced in preventing the disease from spreading.

At the latter end of September a serious outbreak of scarlatina occurred in Mere, 29 cases being reported between that date and the end of the year. On enquiry I found that all the cases were among children attending the National Schools, none of the scholars of the other large public school being at that time affected. I was unable to trace the origin of the outbreak among the scholars, but there is every reason to believe that some child must have attended the schools whilst recovering from an attack of the disease. Under the circumstances I considered it advisable to close the schools for a time, and took steps to try and prevent it spreading, by isolation and the use of disinfectants. At the end of the year the epidemic was still prevalent in the town, and had caused the death of one child.

At the latter end of September three cases of scarlatina were reported in a cottage at Sedgehill. As the house was situated at some distance from others in the locality, the cases were effectually isolated.

### MEASLES.

The district has been free from this disease during the year, no cases having come under my notice.

### WHOOPING COUGH.

This disease has been generally prevalent in the district during the year, and caused one death at Stourton in the early part of October.



## DIPHTHERIA.

Only two cases were reported during the year, one at Mere, and one at East Knoyle. No death resulted from the disease.

## TYPHOID FEVER.

One case was reported in Mere during the month of October.

## THE INFECTIOUS DISEASE NOTIFICATION ACT.

This Act has been in force in the district during the year, and I feel more convinced of its great utility. Without it there would have been no official notification of the outbreaks of scarlatina until the disease had become general. Not only from the information gained by it were the sanitary officers able, by isolation and other means, to endeavour to prevent the disease spreading in the immediate neighbourhood, but also, as occurred in two cases, by stopping those dwelling in the same house from milking whilst coming in contact with patients suffering from the disease, to prevent the infection from being carried, by means of milk, to other parts of the country, especially London. I consider this a point of great importance, and one that deserves attention in dairy districts from which large quantities of milk are sent to town. As soon as possible after the notification of an outbreak of infectious disease, the premises were visited, and the sanitary state of the dwelling examined, and, as far as possible, any sanitary defects corrected. In this manner much useful work was done in the district during the year. In preventing the spread of a serious epidemic of scarlatina, such as has lately occurred in Mere, the sanitary authorities have experienced certain difficulties, viz., the difficulty of preventing the inhabitants of a house in which there is a case, but who themselves are free from the disease, from mixing with or otherwise coming in contact with those living around. In some cases this is due to the fact that it is necessary for some member or members of the household to gain a living, in the course of which they come in contact with many people. The sanitary authorities are not in a position, where a large number of households are involved, to pay a number of workmen to remain at home. In many cases it was due, however, to the indifference or carelessness of persons coming in contact with infectious cases, these persons disregarding the advice of the sanitary officers. Such cases are often reported, but it is difficult to obtain sufficient proof to justify legal steps being taken. Another difficulty the sanitary officials experience is the impossibility of satisfactorily disinfecting the houses after the recovery of the patients. In small cottages it is impossible to turn all the inhabitants out for a sufficient length of time to thoroughly fumigate and ventilate the whole residence at once, and it is seldom that the owners of such houses will go to the expense of whitewashing and repapering the houses after the sanitary officers have fumigated them. As far as the present condition of affairs will allow, all is done that is possible by means of fumigation with sulphur, &c., but I do not regard the disinfection as satisfactory.

## GENERAL SANITARY STATE OF THE DISTRICT.

From observations made during my periodic visits of inspection, in the district, I am of opinion that, as a rule, the general sanitary state is good. The chief sanitary defect I have discovered, has been the insanitary condition of privies and W.C's. In the villages, where cesspits are generally used, these are often allowed to remain unemptied until their contents become a source of danger to health. In Mere there are many pan-closets connected with the sewers, and these are supposed to be flushed with water by hand. I find that in many cases not sufficient water is used to keep the connection with the main sewer properly flushed. The condition resulting is fraught with dangers, owing to the accumulation and escape of foul air, and is liable to lead to outbreaks of Diphtheria and Typhoid. In most of the villages there are seldom any drains to the houses where slops may be disposed of, the latter being usually emptied on the garden plot, and dry in. This answers well if the soil used is not too near to the houses, and frequently turned over and changed. In towns and villages where drains are used to carry off the slops, &c., I have, as a rule, found them kept well flushed, but in some cases the sinks were situated too near the dwellings to be free from danger to health.

During the year you will see that, according to the report of the Inspector of Nuisances, 1295 cottages have been inspected, 79 Nuisances have been reported, and 78 abated, 16 houses have been disinfected after disease, 79 dairies and milk-shops and 93 cowsheds inspected. In 16 cases the water supplies to houses have been improved, and nine samples of water have been taken for analysis.

## WATER SUPPLY.

Although the rainfall during the past summer was much under the average, I received but few complaints of a deficient supply of water. I have examined many samples from various parts of the district during the year, and in cases where I considered the water as unfit for domestic purposes, I have reported the fact to you, and steps have been taken to remedy it. During the month of March I visited East Knoyle, carefully examined the source and quality of the Water Supply, and sent your council a special report of the same. As a result you considered the present supply of the village in a defective state, and took steps at once to furnish a better general supply. I trust the work you are now carrying out will result in all parts of the village obtaining a good supply in the course of the present year.

Trusting you will consider this report for the past year satisfactory,

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

B. POPE BARTLETT,

Medical Officer of Health.

Bourton, February, 1899.

## COUNTY OF WILTS.

Summary of Work done through the Sanitary Inspector in the Rural District of Mere, during the Year ending December 31st, 1898 :—

	Total No. for Year.
Complaints received .. ..	7
Cottages inspected .. ..	1295
Slaughter-houses inspected .. ..	11
Bakehouses inspected .. ..	17
Dairies and Milkshops inspected .. ..	79
Cowsheds inspected .. ..	93
Filthy houses cleansed, sec. 46 Public Health Act, 1875 .. ..	9
Houses disinfected .. ..	16
Overcrowding abated .. ..	5
Houses placed in habitable repair .. ..	3
Houses closed .. ..	1
Wells sunk or improved supplies of water afforded .. ..	3
Wells cleansed or repaired .. ..	13
Houses connected with sewers .. ..	3
Earth, pail, or improved privies constructed or existing privies altered .. ..	6
Animals improperly kept removed .. ..	15
Samples of water taken for analysis .. ..	9
Nuisances reported or detected .. ..	79
Nuisances abated .. ..	78
Notices served .. ..	79

(Signed)

J. BELBEN,

Inspector of Nuisances.

## THE REGISTERED BIRTHS

In the several parishes have been as follows :—

	Census, 1891.	Estimated to middle of 1898.	Registered Births.
Kilminster .. ..	369	343	9
East Knoyle .. ..	956	899	21
West Knoyle .. ..	158	148	2
Kingston Deverill .. ..	234	221	6
Monkton Deverill .. ..	104	97	3
Maiden Bradley .. ..	606	569	22
Mere .. ..	2279	2132	45
Sedgehill .. ..	176	165	2
Stourton .. ..	410	393	12
Zeals .. ..	470	441	9
	5762	5408	131



## NEW CASES OF SICKNESS.

In each locality coming to the knowledge of the Medical Officer of Health :—

	Scarla- tina.	Diph- theria.	Enteric or Typhoid.	Continued Fever.
East Knoyle .. ..	1	..	..	..
Maiden Bradley ..	2	..	..	1
Mere .. ..	29	1	1	..
Sedgehill .. ..	3	..	..	..
	<hr/> 34	<hr/> 2	<hr/> 1	<hr/> 1

Notification of infectious disease has been compulsory in the district since January 1, 1890.

## THE TABLE OF DEATHS SHOW :—

	At all ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5.	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25.	25 and under 65.	65 and upwards.
Kilminster .. ..	7	..	..	..	..	3	4
East Knoyle .. ..	12	1	..	..	1	2	8
West Knoyle .. ..	1	..	..	..	..	1	..
Kingston Deverill ..	1	..	..	..	..	1	..
Monkton Deverill ..	1	..	..	..	..	1	..
Maiden Bradley ..	9	2	..	..	..	1	6
Mere .. ..	24	3	1	1	..	6	13
Sedgehill .. ..	2	..	..	..	..	1	1
Stourton .. ..	8	1	1	..	1	..	5
Zeals .. ..	6	..	..	..	..	1	5
	<hr/> 71	<hr/> 7	<hr/> 2	<hr/> 1	<hr/> 2	<hr/> 17	<hr/> 42

## THE CAUSES OF MORTALITY ARE :—

	Scarlatina.	Whooping Cough.	Diarrhoea and Dysentery.	Phthisis.	Bronchitis, Pneumonia and Pleurisy.	Heart Disease.	Influenza.	Injuries.	All other diseases.	Total.
Kilminster .. ..	..	..	..	2	..	3	..	..	2	7
East Knoyle .. ..	..	..	..	..	1	5	..	..	6	12
West Knoyle .. ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	1
Kingston Deverill ..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	1
Monkton Deverill ..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	1
Maiden Bradley ..	..	..	1	..	..	2	2	..	4	9
Mere .. ..	1	..	..	3	3	7	..	..	10	24
Sedgehill .. ..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	1	2
Stourton .. ..	..	1	..	..	..	3	..	1	3	8
Zeals .. ..	..	..	..	..	..	2	1	..	3	6
	<hr/> 1	<hr/> 1	<hr/> 1	<hr/> 5	<hr/> 5	<hr/> 23	<hr/> 3	<hr/> 1	<hr/> 31	<hr/> 71